

"Actions that Facilitate Community-centered Radio"



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Community radio is when the radio station is owned, governed, managed and operated by members of a community. We acknowledge that the owners of radio stations with a **commercial licence**, or radio stations owned by humanitarian, religious or NGOs or charitable organisations can dedicate their programming to community purposes. But they are not technically community radio because the radio station's ownership, management and governance is not with the community. That is why HCR uses the term "**community-centered radio**" to embrace the diversity of situations where the community genuinely participates in programming, despite the status of the radio station's ownership, management and governance.

Four facilitators initiate a "**community-centered radio**" (CCR) partnership between community, radio station and service providers.

CCR Facilitator 1: What have we got?

The radio station asks: What have we got that the community does not have? What have we got that can be put to use to support the community's efforts for social change?

In one of our project villages the school had no library. The radio station asked the question. The answer was: a room in the radio station, a safe environment for children to access, a management structure that guaranteed ongoing staff supervision of a library. With funding a quiet, clean helpful resource became available to the entire village. Your radio station might be a known and stable location – so let your community use it as their postal address and you announce on air when there is a letter for someone. It might be the internet: let college students use it for homework. It might be a fence (allow local tradespeople to post their advertising posters on it) and so on

All radio stations, however, have a public profile, access to authorities, credibility and the ability to make opinions known. We have a degree of power and authority that communities do not. In simple terms it is called "a voice". If we have it, and the community needs it, why not make it available? In one place we found the local government health services had no credibility and few visited the clinic. Rather than organise our own health clinic with visiting doctors we organised the health clinic in collaboration with the health workers. We used our station facilities (we had more space) but the local health workers were the ones who registered participants and assisted with assessments and disbursement of simple non-prescription medicines. The attendance rate at that village clinic increased. In that situation what did the radio station have that the local clinic did not?

CCR Facilitator 2: Get your shoes dirty

Radio management often says to programmers, “We need to get out of the airconditioned studio to meet listeners”. HCR says: Go further! One thing we have got that we can give the community is ourselves. Get your shoes dirty and give yourself. That means we get over our self-perceptions of professionalism that keep us inside our studios and distanced from our listeners in an attitude of broadcasting TO our listeners. Step outside of our boundaries of education and privilege into the community’s world and broadcast WITH the listeners because we have given of ourselves. One programming team conducted its community and health development meetings at a local tea house where villagers could listen in and even contribute to decision-making.

CCR Facilitator 3: Hand over the mic

We all have microphones that hold on to; not just physically with our hand but symbolically in the sense that we feel we need to retain control of what is said. But what if we “hand over the mic” – release it physically and symbolically? That means we acknowledge that others can broadcast – not ourselves – and have as good an impact as ourselves if not better; they are in the community – why not train them to produce and present radio products? Train your communication partners to design their own radio products and drive the desk. In several of our projects health and social development workers write their own CSAs, plan their weekly radio show, interview, present, drive the desk -- do it all. Revise the duties of your on-air staff to be program supervisors, getting their shoes dirty to visit communication partners to mentor and guide them to make their own radio products.

CCR Facilitator 4: Community members might not be as technically skilled as ourselves but they have Communication FX (effects). They are local. Local voices. Local voices making the messages. As much as possible, get your professionals off the air. Train local people to design and voice their own products. For example, rather than a station-produced CSA announcing the opening times of a health clinic, train the health worker to produce CSAs with their own voice and a more personal, relational message. We know, from all over the world, the impact this has in social change.